
An authentick ACCOUNT of the

L I F E

OF

PAUL WELLS, Gent.

An authentic account of the



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L I F E
O F
PAUL W E L L S, Gent.
WHO WAS *u*
Eexecuted at *Oxford*, *Sept. 1*, 1749,
F O R
F O R G E R Y;

Notwithstanding the Interest used to get him a PARDON.

With an Account of his Crime, and Behaviour from the Time of his receiving SENTENCE to his EXECUTION.

Also the REASONS which prevented him from receiving his MAJESTY's Clemency.

By a Gentleman of C. C. C. OXON.

L O N D O N,

Printed for R. BALDWIN, jun. at the *Rose*
in *Pater-noster Row*. MDCCXLIX.

L. F. I. E.

PAUL WELLS

F. O. R. G. R. Y.



With an Account of the
Museum from the time of its
invention to the present day.

AND THE REASONS why it is
the most valuable of
all the Collections.

By a Gentleman of C. C. O. O.

L O N D O N

Printed for R. Baldwin, in the Strand,
in Faversham Street, London.



An ACCOUNT of the

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O F

PAUL WELLS, Gent.



HE Lives and Actions of the VIRTUOUS, the BRAVE, and HEROICK, have doubtless, in all Ages, caus'd an Emulation in the Minds of their Successors: And when Men of Eminence are employed in laudible Pursuits, of what Kind soever, it cannot fail of being some Satisfaction to them, that should they fall short in the Accomplish-

Accomplishment of their Designs, their good Intentions will nevertheless be recorded by the *Biographer*, and a due Respect for their Memory be preserv'd in the Breast of every well-dispos'd Reader. On the contrary, where the Actions of Men have been base, on a bare Recital of their Crimes, the Mind is fill'd with Horror and Detestation. So that to be acquainted with the Lives and Actions of Men, whether Virtuous or Vicious, may be of great Advantage to us in our future Conduct; since we may have an Opportunity of avoiding every Thing that deserv'd Censure in our Predecessor, and of embracing what cannot fail of turning to our Advantage.

The Misconduct and Sufferings of *Paul Wells*, the unhappy Person of whom we are going to speak, we hope will deter Others from
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splitting on the same dreadful Rock; and 'tis with this View that the Author of the following Narrative undertook the mournful Relation.

This unhappy Person was the Son of a worthy Gentleman, that lived upon an Estate of his own at *Cudsdon* in the County of *Oxford*, who took proper Care of his Education, and afterwards brought him up to the Law, under a Gentleman of unblemish'd Character at *Wycombe*, in the County of *Bucks*; with this Gentleman he served a regular Clerkship, and was afterwards very honourably admitted an Attorney.

During the Time of his being under the Care of his Master, he was like most other Attorney's Clerks, a wild, gay young Fellow, but yet at this Time of Day, no vicious Inclinations appear'd in him that seem'd to forebode
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the fatal Catastrophe which at length befel him.

Soon after his Admittance, a very favourable Opportunity offered for his settling at *Oxford*, which he embraced, and with such Success as no young Practitioner could have ever hoped for. And now it was that he wanted Conduct at the Helm of his Affairs, to steer his Course :-----Fortune threw her Smiles upon him in full Radiance, and offered him an Affluence for his Support ; but for want of Sagacity, this Sunshine in his Morn' of Life drew on a Cloud ;----These Blessings kindly bestowed on him by Providence, he perverted to an ill Use ;----Wine, Dainties, and Women he embrac'd with open Arms, and with great Rapidity rush'd on his Ruin. Thus he followed the Bent of his Passions, forgetting to pay a due Adoration to that Almighty Being,

Being, which with these temporal Blessings, gave him also his Existence.

After having embarked in the Pursuit of sensual Pleasures, a Neglect of his Business naturally ensued ; and at length it was discovered that he had perverted to his own Use several Sums of Money which had been put into his Hands to get Securities for ; and this Step, in Conjunction with some other Male-practices entirely destroyed his Credit.

About this Time he also embarked in a Quarrel, with the Officers of the University of *Oxford*, which brought on a very expensive Law-Suit that proved a great Detriment to him, both in his Character and Fortune. And Mr. *Wells* having at various Times been called to Account in the Courts above and severely reprimanded for his illegal Proceedings,

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and still continuing the like Practices, he was at length fore-judg'd the Court.

Thus by a Succession of Events his Reputation was destroyed ; and this being gone, he once for all bid adieu to Shame ; no Cause was now too base for his Acceptance ;-----even the Widow and Fatherless he burthen'd with Sorrow. Many of his Proceedings were such, that should we relate them they would scarce appear credible ; and, in short, he seem'd to glory in his Wickedness.

But here we see, that tho' the wicked Man flourish for a little while, yet his Joys are transitory ; and in the Eve of Life, when Conscience tells him that shortly he shall give an Account for all his past Actions, how melancholy must be his Prospect of a future State ! What a gloomy View must he have of Eternity ! And who
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can describe the Anguish of his Soul!-----Under these unhappy Circumstances, Men too frequently take a wrong Biass, and instead of Repentance, have Recourse to delusive Joys; and thus Conscience is lulled to Sleep which before prey'd upon the wounded Mind like a Vulture, or ravenous Wolf.

After a Man has once given Way to the Temptations of the Devil, Sin is of such an alluring Nature that it leads him Headlong through all its Labyrinths, without giving him Time for cool Reflection; by a frequent Repition his Vices become habitual, and for the present afford Delight. So that in this corrupt State we need not be astonish'd at his Proceedings.

The Crime for which Mr. *Wells* suffered was Forgery; and it has been affirmed that this was not

the first Offence of the same Nature which he had been guilty of; however it was the first prov'd upon him, and was discovered in the following manner :

He had been indebted to Mrs. *Crooke of Oxford*, in the Sum of Nine Pounds odd Money, near six Years, and she not being able to get the Money of him, at the Summer Assizes, 1748, sued him in an Action of Debt, when to evade the Payment of that Sum, he produced a Receipt in Court of a subsequent Date ; but this Receipt being narrowly inspected by the Judge, Jury, and Prosecutor's Council, it appeared to be a Forgery, by the last Figure in the Date of the Year having been altered from a *Two* to a *Three*, whereby the whole became false and counterfeit ;—upon this a Verdict was given for the Plaintiff, and a Bill of Indictment ordered

der'd to be presented to the Grand Jury against the Defendant *Paul Wells*; this Bill was accordingly presented, and found a true Bill at the same Affizes; and Orders were immediately given for apprehending him:---However for a little while he had prudence enough to secrete himself, but in less than half a Year he was often at *Oxford*, and within about five Miles of it appeared as publicly as if it had been out of the Power even of his Enemies to have molested him: It is somewhat strange indeed how he could be so infatuated; but true it is, that notwithstanding he was under these Circumstances, at the following Affizes he brought an Action against several Persons for an Assault, which Assault was, the upbraiding him with his Guilt in this Affair of Mrs. *Crooke's*, and for which a Bill of Indictment

was

was found against him, as is before observed.

Some Time after this, a Lord Chief Justice's Warrant was obtained, and Mr. *Wells* apprehended by Virtue thereof, after which he was committed to *Oxford* Castle: At this Time his poor distressed Father was a Prisoner there for a Debt of Five Hundred Pounds, for the Payment of which Sum he had been his Son's Security. Every tender Parent will have a due Sense of the old Gentleman's Anxiety at this Event, which is much better to imagine than describe.

During the Time of young Mr. *Wells's* being under Confinement before his Trial, he never appeared in Publick, nor so much as came out of his Room; but his poor Father still continued to extend his paternal Care towards him with as much Tendernefs as
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when an Infant at his Mother's Breast, and in his Looks Love, Sorrow, and Despair, seem'd to be combined.

In this Interval the Young Gentleman did not appear to have a due Sense of his own Misfortune, but his Time was chiefly taken up with other People's Concerns ; however, when his Trial came on, his Danger then presented itself before him with a dismal Aspect, and gave him such a Shock as quite destroy'd his Manhood, so that he was not able even to endeavour making a Defence ; and the Jury found him guilty both of forging the Receipt, and publishing the same knowing it to be false and counterfeit.

Lord Chief Justice *Willes* was upon the Bench at this Trial, who behaved with great Lenity towards

towards the Prisoner ; and when he pronounced Sentence of Death upon him, he pathetically express'd his Sorrow on the Occasion, and gave him five Weeks to prepare himself for Death, and use his Endeavours to obtain a Pardon ; and while his Lordship was in *Gloucestershire*, upon his Circuit, he respited his Execution for fourteen Days longer.

In the mean Time a truly Worthy, and Right Reverend Divine used his utmost Efforts to obtain Mr. *Wells* a Pardon, and drew up a Petition to his Majesty in his Behalf:---But 'tis said that Means having been used to make his general Character known, occasioned the Affair to be brought before the Privy C-----l ; and that after the Nature of the Offence had been duly considered, and debated upon, it was thought dangerous to shew him

him Mercy, since the Fortunes of many of his Majesty's loving Subjects might be thereby endangered, whether he was permitted to live in this Kingdom, or in any of his Majesty's Colonies abroad. Thus the Safety of Trade and Commerce, which lays so much exposed to Invasions of this Nature, prevented Mr. *Wells* from receiving Clemency.

Before the Event of this Petition was known, his Friends had great Hopes of his being saved, and comforted him as much as possible; but as soon as he was acquainted with the ill Success of their Endeavours, he bid adieu to all farther Hopes of Clemency.

With true Penitence he now look'd up to Heaven for Aid, and confess'd his Guilt; throwing aside the Vanities of this Life, and
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wholly resigning himself to the Will of God ; and he declared several Times that he had rather die than live.

His Sorrow indeed was great for the Odium he had drawn on his Family ; but he ardently begged that him and his Actions might be buried in Oblivion, and after his Death never give them the least Concern.

Unity and Love he recommended to them in the strongest Terms, and pray'd for their present Prosperity and future Happiness.

He was not a Man of much Courage, having at different Times in the Course of his Life, under the Frowns of Adversity, sunk quite beneath the Dignity of Manhood ; but however, in his
present

present unhappy Circumstances (after he had had Time to consider a little) his Behaviour was decent.

Indeed the Shock of his Sentence had such an Effect upon him that he fainted away in Court, and was obliged to be carried out into the open Air to recover, where for some Time he appear'd Lifeless.

After this he was taken back to the Castle in a Chariot, and for a Fortnight or three Weeks he continued so weak and sickly, that it was thought he could not have lived to the Time fixed for his Execution; and many People were ready to believe that he had used Means to shorten his Life, rather than suffer the Sentence of the Law; but after some Time he recovered greatly, and before his Execution, though he had not much bodily Strength, yet his

Spirits were very brisk, making proper Deductions for his present Circumstances.

He lived very low, entirely abstaining from all Kinds of Meat, but eat Vegetables pretty heartily, and his chief Liquor was Tea.

So that he now kept himself cool, and capable of Reflection on his past Life, and his approaching Fate he had constantly in View : Some or other of his Relations were generally with him, especially his Father, and he took all the Care in his Power to acquaint them with the State of his Affairs, so far as concerned the Family ; and he lamented very much that it was not in his Power to make some Provision for a Natural Child which he should leave without Support.

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For some Time he had an Intention of saying something to the Spectators at the Place of Execution, and for this Purpose made Minutes of what he proposed to speak ; but before the Time came he chang'd his Mind; and whether he destroyed the Paper, or left it behind him I cannot be certain.

Mr. *Wells* was entirely his Mother's Darling ; and I am assured that her Partiality in favour of him, was carried to such a Pitch as to make her Conduct highly blameable. And it is observable, that when Parents share their Affections unequally amongst their Children, their great Hopes of Comfort are often frustrated.

Even on the Day of Execution many People fancied Mr. *Wells* would

would have received a Pardon; and to satisfy such as were possess'd of this Opinion, the Sheriff delay'd the Execution beyond the usual Time.

The preceding Night Mr. *Wells* went to Bed, and his Father stay'd with him all Night, in which he had very little Rest; but yet his Mind was pretty serene, and he discoursed very rationally.

In the Morning, about Ten o'Clock, after he had been at Prayers, he was calm and perfectly resign'd to his Fate; and said said if the Officers were ready to attend him, he would wait on them.

The Sheriff was not then come down, but as soon as he came Mr. *Wells* was acquainted therewith, and then he was greatly shock'd

shock'd, and begg'd for Time to send for his Mother, to *Cudsdon*, that he might see her once more before he died ; this Time was accordingly granted him, and a Messenger was dispatch'd, but she did not come.

But now was the most moving Scene that occurred between this miserable Youth and his unhappy Father, when they were obliged to part ; the Goaler and Officers being come up to Mr. *Wells*, by the Sheriff's Order, they desired the old Gentleman to take his Leave of him, and go out of the Room before they took him away.

Upon this Summons they met for the last Time, and after embracing eagerly for several Minutes, and shedding a Flood of Tears, they prayed for each other's

ther's eternal Happiness, expressing their Hopes of meeting hereafter in a blisful State; and then with great Reluctance they took a final Farewel, and parted.

After this Mr. *Wells* was pinioned, and brought down Stairs into the Yard, where he wept bitterly, there being many of his old Acquaintance waiting to take Leave of him.

At this Time he look'd pitiously, and begg'd that his Friends would not suffer him to be insulted, but that they would assist him with their Prayers.

After staying in the Yard a little while, the Halter was put about his Neck, and he then proceeded to the Place of Execution. He was attended at the Tree by a worthy Divine, who
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pray'd with him for some Time, and when Prayers were ended, he kiss'd and bid Farewel to several Persons that were near him, and then attempted to ascend the Ladder, but he was so weak that the Sheriff's Officers were obliged to assist and support him; so that had he been inclined to say any Thing, his Spirits and Strength were not sufficient to have carried him through the Fatigue.

He seem'd to be under great Concern lest his Body should be taken away, and begg'd that it might not; and after the Executioner had fix'd the Rope, and asked his Pardon as is Customary, he desir'd he would not trouble him, and said he forgave him and all the World.

Things being brought to this Crisis Mr. *Wells's* Cap was pull'd
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over his Face, and after letting him stand a little while, he was turned off.

There was a great Concourse of People assembled to see the Execution of so remarkable a Person, some of whom express'd their Joy, and others their Sorrow on the Occasion, but all of them behaved with Decency and good Manners.

After his Body was taken down it was put in a Coffin prepared for that Purpose, and deposited in the Chape at the Castle till the Day following, when it was carried in a Hearse to *Cudsdon*, and interred in the Church there, amongst the Remains of his Ancestors.

In this reproachful Manner, Mr. *Wells* concluded an ill-spent
Life

Life of Thirty-Five Years: And it is hoped his Repentance and Death have attoned for his many-fold Crimes.

Many other Particulars which might have been drawn into this Narrative, for the Sake of Decency, have been purposely omitted; which Omissions, our courteous Reader will be pleased to pardon, since it would be exercising Barbarity on the Memory of the Man, to record all the Calumny which might have been collected: Therefore we shall take our Leave by entreating all such as shall become acquainted with his Misfortunes, to be warned by his untimely End.

F I N I S

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